

NSC BRIEFING

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3 AUGUST 1955

OUTLOOK IN SUDAN

- I. Sudan, vast and underdeveloped former UK-Egyptian "condominium" (area: 1 million sq. mi.; pop: 8 million), now approaching time when, under terms 55 agreement, population--divided both in race and religion-- will choose between full independence or some form of union with Egypt.
 - A. Showdown likely at special parliamentary session called for 16 Aug '55, although decision could be postponed until 1957.
 - B. Only year ago, all odds favored union with Egypt, but now issue very much in doubt.
- II. Under Jan 54 grant of self-government to Sudan, local cabinet and parliament became fully responsible for internal affairs.
 - A. British Governor General (nominally responsible to Condominium pair, UK and Egypt) remained "supreme constitutional authority" during "transitional period" (to end in self-determination no later than Jan 57).
 - B. During this period, GovGen retains emergency powers in case breakdown internal security.
 - C. Also holds exclusive responsibility for foreign affairs.
 - D. Actually, GovGen has restricted self to largely ceremonial activities.
- III. This is in line with UK policy for area. In past 18 months British administration has been "Sudanized".

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- A. Formerly British provincial governors, political service staff, police and army replaced by Sudanese.
 - B. Only handful British now remain, in non-influential, non-policy positions (i.e. second echelon in medical, education administration).
- IV. In 53 elections (Sudan's first), pro-Egypt National Unionist Party (NUP) won decisive victory, and Party president (Ismail Azhari) became prime minister of a government committed to eventual close union with Egypt.
- A. NUP draws popular strength from Khatmia religious sect (one of two such Moslem groups in northern Sudan, each with total 1½ million followers).
 - B. Rival sect is Ansar (headed by Sayyid Abdul Rahman al Mahdi - posthumous son of the Mahdi of Khartoum), traditionally anti-Egyptian, pro-independence.
- V. Despite such good start, Egyptians overplayed hand. Mistakes included:
- A. Lavish subsidies to pro-unionist politicians and local leaders.
 - B. Blatant interference in Sudanese affairs--Egyptian member of Governor General's Commission (interim advisory body) openly using position to direct local politicians.
 - C. Sudanese nationalists, at first willing to ally with Egypt as means of ridding selves of British, became increasingly unwilling to see Cairo step into UK's former place.

-2-

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- D. Conflict between pro-independence members of Khatmia and Egyptian-bought NUP politicians came to climax in Dec 54 cabinet crisis, resignation three influential Khatmia ministers.
 - E. Now, despite two sects' bitter religious rivalry (Khatmia followers view Ansars as heretics), reports from Khartoum indicate that agreement between two on cooperation for independence may be imminent.
- VI. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Ashari (whom Egyptians thought safely in pocket) has switched position in face overwhelming popular sentiment favoring independence.
- A. In April 55, his party's executive committee announced decision in favor "independence and full sovereignty" for Sudan.
 - B. Also called for extraordinary session of parliament this August, set machinery in motion for election of constituent assembly (which body will take vote either for independence or for union with Egypt).
 - C. Whole sequence will probably take at least until Apr 56, possibly until Sep.
- VII. In interim, Egyptians busy trying regain lost ground. Main target: overthrow Ashari regime.
- A. Egyptians paying substantial subsidies to his opponents within NUP - particularly party vice president Muhammad Nur al Din.

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- B. Also widespread bribing, increased activities among primitive non-Moslem tribesmen (tot: 3 million) of south, in hopes inflaming traditional southern hatred, suspicion of Moslem north.**
- 1. Eleven southern deputies, formerly pro-independence, recently adopted strong pro-Egyptian position.**
- C. Cairo radio has lately doubled broadcasts to Sudan, making vigorous attacks Azhari.**
- D. Egyptian propaganda suggests US, as well as UK, is behind switch of Sudanese in favor full independence.**

VIII. Future of Azhari government seems to depend on achievement of coalition between rival northern sects on pro-independence basis.

- A. Such coalition could assure continuation of independence drive--but deep-seated religious antagonism may prevent cooperation.**
- B. In any event, we can expect continuing Egyptian intrigue during coming months, as Sudan takes final steps towards "self-determination."**